The Iran War Plan

Pentagon gears up for “major” war with Iran

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President Trump’s menu of options for dealing with Tehran now includes one he didn’t have in his first term: full-scale war.

Pentagon and company contracting documents I’ve obtained describe “a unique joint staff planning” effort underway in Washington and in the Middle East to refine the next generation of “a major regional conflict” with Iran.

The new planning effort, sometimes referred to as the SEED project, covers everything from subtle tools like military deception right up to the rather less subtl use of nuclear weapons. The plans are the result of a reassessment of Iran's military capabilities, as well as a fundamental shift in how America conducts war.

Though many in the media incorrectly dismissed the recent U.S. attack on the Houthis in Yemen as little more than a continuation of what the Biden administration was already doing, the new Iran war preparations make clear that the U.S. is exploring a far more aggressive approach. Following his successful assassination of Iran's top general Qassim Suleimani in 2020, Donald Trump seems to have taken the lesson that aggressive action is relatively cost-free.

The Pentagon, meanwhile, has watched Iran develop into a major missile and drone power over the past decade. Hardly anyone believes any longer that Iran is interested in any kind of ground invasion of its neighbors (the previous planning assumption). Iran's nuclear program is also no longer the Pentagon's highest concern. The "war" in many ways is already here, the combination of narrow, pin-prick attacks by proxies, Iran's various covert and influence campaigns, and its use and proliferation of long-range drones and missiles, especially to Russia.

As assumptions about Iran as a military threat have shifted, so too have attitudes about the American way of war. Countering Iran's constant efforts takes the combined efforts of the military, the CIA, cyber and space agencies, and the Departments of the Treasury and State . No war today is fought solely by the military.

The war plan emphasizes a "holistic approach" to "planning, coordination, and synchronization" of U.S. Government activities, says one document. CENTCOM, the Pentagon's regional command responsible for the Middle East and Iran, is tasked with creating a family of plans that incorporate U.S.-only, bilateral, and multilateral operations with partners and allies, according to the documents.

As activities around the ISIS war and now support for Israel in Gaza has shown, war planning has to be more multilateral in nature, taking into consideration everything from the use of allied bases and airspace to gaining political support for the fighting.

The new war plan construct is itself brand new, in that the “multilateral” component includes Israel working in unison with Arab Gulf partners for the first time, either indirectly or directly. The plan also includes many different contingencies and levels of war, according to the documents, from “crisis action,” meaning response to events and attacks, to “deliberate” planning, which refers to set scenarios that flow from crises that escalate out of control.

One document warns of the “distinct possibility” of the war “escalating outside of the Unite States Government’s intention” and impacting the rest of the region, demanding a multifaceted approach.

As a result, CENTCOM has been tasked with the creation of a set of strategies, campaign plans, “commander’s intents,” concepts of operation, theater plans, operations orders, and synchronization efforts to incorporate all interested and involved parties.

The various planning documents being reworked include:

- Global Campaign Plan for Iran (GCP-I): “Addresses the most pressing trans-regional and multi-functional strategic challenges, across all domains,” including conventional and special operations forces; air, ground, sea, subsea, cyber and space warfare.
- CENTCOM Campaign Plan: Primary plan through which the CENTCOM commander “executes his day-to-day campaigning.”
- “Operational Plan up to a Level 4 detail for Iran.” OPLANs are now prepared at four levels of detail:

    - Level 1 involves a Commander's Estimate of courses of action and militar options to meet every potential contingency.
    - Level 2 is the Base Plan that lays out an approved course of action.
    - Level 3 involves a full "concept plan."
    - Level 4 is a full operations plan with allocation of specific units and mobilization and deployment procedures.
- Decision Support Book to guide the President and senior decision makers in the first 96 hours of the execution of the Level 4 OPLAN.
- Multilateral Combined OPLAN, including "Multilateral Engagement Strategy to obtain access basing and over flight."
- Discrete Strike Option Plan, prepared for specific "Target Sets" such as Iranian leadership or nuclear capabilities.

War preparations for Iran, the contracting documents state, take place at the Top Secret, "sensitive compartmented information," "special access program," "specia technical operations," sensitive activities, and Focal Point levels of classification. The whole effort is so closely held that the contracting companies supporting war planning are warned that even mention of *unclassified* portions is prohibited:

> *"Disclosure of any information related to this contract (classified or unclassified is strictly prohibited without the expressed written consent of … [CENTCOM]. This includes, but is not limited to, use or information in unclassified brochures promotion sales, literature, reports to stockholders, or similar material."*

U.S. Central Command did not respond to my request for comment about the Iran war plans. However, Pentagon spokesperson, Sean Parnell, alluded to the question in a press briefing on Monday.

> *REPORTER: Is the U.S. military considering a military option for Iran?*

> *PARNELL: … all options are on the table at this time.*

For the Pentagon, "all options" is a bit of a boilerplate answer (though it is certainly more belligerent than the messaging of the Biden era).

When Trump talks about his ill-defined policy of applying "maximum pressure" on Iran, all options now include all-out war. While a range of military options are often provided to presidents in a passive aggressive attempt on the part of the Pentagon to steer them to the one favored by the brass, Trump already has shown his proclivity to select the most provocative option. Trump reportedly "stunned" Pentagon officials in 2020 when he chose to assassinate Iran's top general Qassim Suleimani from his menu of choices.

This week, the Pentagon spokesman Parnell also referred to Trump's post on Truth Social, in which he vowed "dire" consequences for Iran in the event of Houthi retaliation. Trump had just conducted a strike on Houthi leadership as well as command and control elements — an unprecedented escalation from previous operations and a clear indication that we're at war with Iran, as I wrote yesterday.

The Trump administration has used the Houthi strike to differentiate itself from the Biden administration. As Trump's National Security Advisor Mike Waltz told ABC:

> "*The difference is these were not pinprick, back and forth, what ultimately proved to be feckless attacks. This was an overwhelming response that actually targeted multiple Houthi leaders and took them out. And the difference here is one, going after the Houthi leadership and two, holding Iran responsible."*

Asked if direct military action on Iran is possible, Waltz replied:

> *"Well, all options are always on the table with the president, but Iran needs to hear him loud and clear … We will not only hold the Houthis accountable, but*

> *we're going to hold Iran, their backers accountable as well and if that means their targeting ship that they have put in to help, their Iranian trainers, IRGC and others, intelligence, other things that they have put in to help the Houthis attack the global economy, those targets will be on the table, too."*

2024 may be behind us but its lessons aren't. Israel's assassination of top Hezbollah officials in Lebanon was largely perceived by Washington to be a resounding success with few downsides. Trump likely took back the same message, leading to his strike on Houthi leadership this week.

If the news media are seeing all of what's going on as some repeat of Biden tit-for tat or limited attacks by Israel on Iran's early warning and air defenses, they are not understanding what's going on behind the scenes. What Trump can now do, which is right out of the Israeli playbook, is attack Iran's command and control, including Iran's leadership, if for no other reason than to emphasize the new boss isn't the same as the old one.

If the past month has shown us anything, it's that Trump's second term will not be the same as his first. The press needs to be way more vigilant than it has been. And I need more of you guys to become paid subscribers so I can keep reporting on our alarmingly quiet march to war. Tomorrow, for example, I'll be reporting on the U.S.'s nuclear option for Iran.

Subscribe so I can keep shedding light on this war. There's so much more to report.

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— Edited by William M. Arkin

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Ken Klippenstein 4d

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Gladwyn d'Souza 4d *Edited*

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So USA. The most incompetent bankruptcy prone billionaire who can't complete a sentence gets to prove his Islamophobia by bombing another country with oil to rank with his sentence completing predecessors.

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